Exam Paper 1: 3 hours
Seamus Heaney: a selection of 20 poems (covered in 1st year)
***Othello,* William Shakespeare** (covered in 2nd year)
Critical appreciation of an unseen poem (covered during 1st and 2nd year)

Exam Paper 2: 3 hours
Wuthering Heights, Charlotte Bronte (covered in 1st year)
The Handmaid's Tale, Margaret Atwood (covered in 2nd year)
Critical appreciation of an unseen prose passage (covered in 1st and 2nd year)

Exam paper 3: 2 hours 45 minutes
Language essay – narrative, descriptive, discursive (covered during 1st and 2nd year)
Summary of 150-200 words on a set text (covered during 1st and 2nd year)
Linguistics – tasks or essay question on a number of topics (covered in 1st year)

Spoken component: 15 minutes (covered during 1st and 2nd years)

Wuthering Heights

Cultural
and Historical Context

The Gothic Novel

Gothic fiction is considered to be a very persistent and productive genre; its works are **scattered along 250 years**.

Gothic is seen as unstable, because its elements came to contaminate almost every other genre, furthermore, it generated new genres.

Gothic fiction **is still widely popular today, although its many forms are not always recognized as Gothic.** In order to understand its place in modern culture, one should first look **into its origins and its evolution, as means to identify the classic features of Gothic fiction**, and trace them in modern fiction.

Gothic, as a literary genre is **hard to define;** there is an ongoing discussion about what the genre form and main tropes are.

The term 'Gothic' in the 18th century meant a 'barbarous', 'mediaeval', and 'supernatural' past. The term was **derogatory, used in discussions about art, architecture, and writing that failed to conform to the standards of neoclassical taste.** Gothic signified the lack of reason, morality, and beauty of feudal beliefs, customs, and works.

As Fred Botting states:
'"Gothic" [...] resonates as much with anxieties and fears concerning the crises and changes in the present as with any terrors of the past. The rejection of feudal barbarity, superstition, and tyranny was necessary to a culture defining itself in diametrically opposed terms: its progress, civilization, and maturity depended on the distance it established between the values of the present and the past'.

It is conventionally considered that the Gothic, **started with the publication of Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*** (1764), **and lasted until Charles Maturin's *Melmoth, The Wanderer*** (1820)**,** thus being specific to the second half of the 18th century, and the first half of the 19th century.

There are critics who consider that the Gothic never ended per se, but evolved, adapted to reflect different realities. For them, the Victorian Gothic evolved to the tropes of mystery and supernatural, madness, doubling, hereditary curses, psychological and physical terror and the uncanny. These Gothic features were **influenced by the Victorians' ideas about death, scientific progress**, and were making the text seem more realistic, and even more disturbing. This resulted in novels, like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and *The Last Man* (1826), Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), or H. G. Wells' *Time Machine* (1895).

In the 20th century these generated the birth of the Science Fiction, Dystopian fiction, and Mystery novel.

During the modern period the Gothic terms have been renegotiated, pointing to a modernist understanding of Gothic as interior drama, rather than dramatic spectacle. Gothic features can be found even in high modernist texts, as: James Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914), in its oppressive, gloomy city streets and corrupted priests; in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) set in a claustrophobic jungle, with its cannibal threats; or in the T. S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* (1922) and its Gothic imagery of tarot readers, femmes fatales, walking dead.

The New-Gothic romance is a subgenre that flourished during the 20th century**,** which **morphed into paranormal romance, featuring werewolves, vampires, fairies, zombies and other monstrous creatures, as its main characters.** The most controversial example of such a paranormal romance today, is **Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series**

Twentieth century Gothic also contaminated other genres and its features **can be found in plays, short stories, literary fiction, poetry etc**. **In the twenty-first century,** Gothic is increasingly hybridized and **it is difficult to securely pin down any longer**.

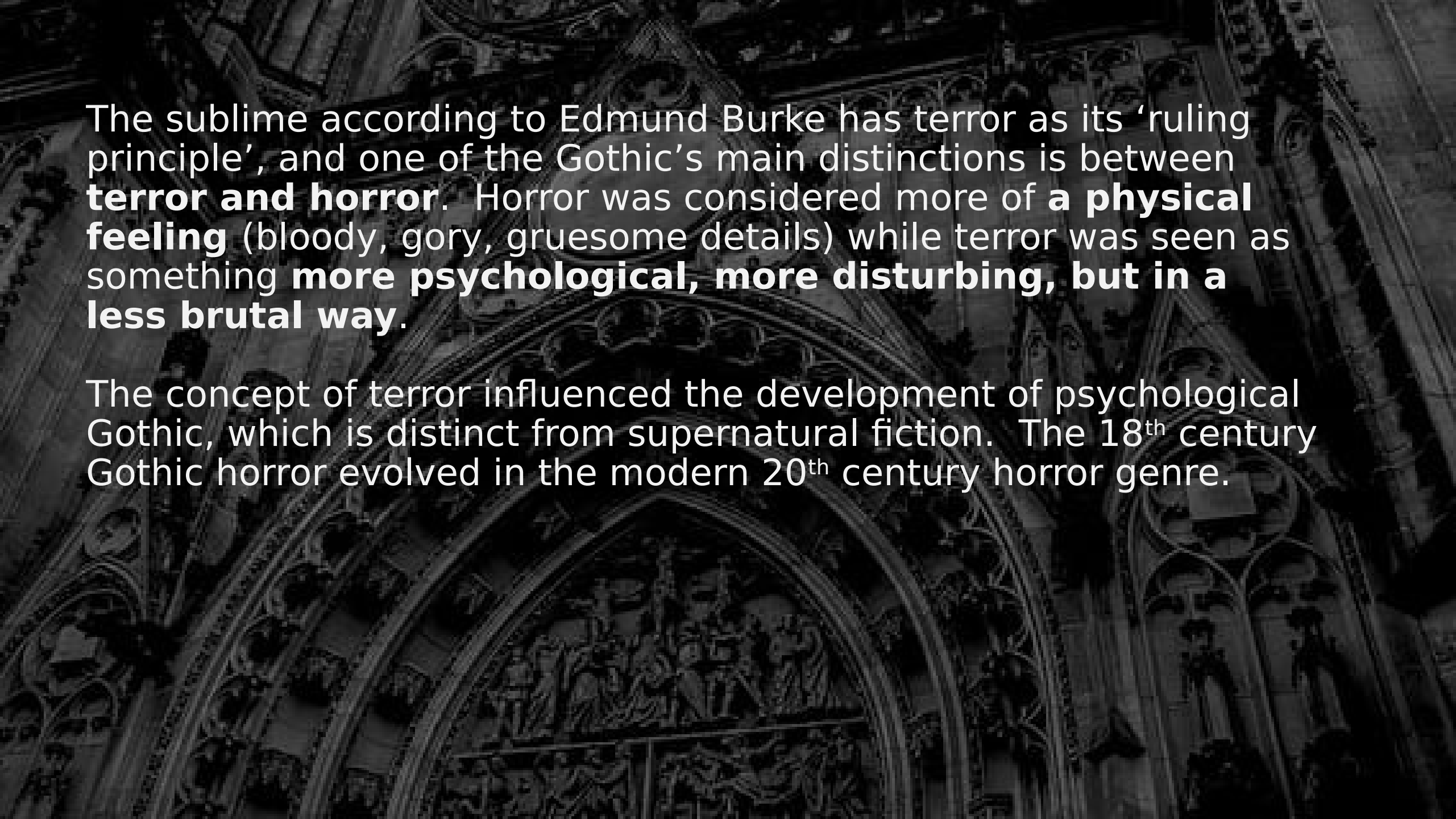
Gothic genre has its **roots in Renaissance tragedies, medieval romances, fairy tales, superstitions, mysteries, and early experiments in the novel**. It was **always inspired by the past,** being a literary genre of historical recycling. **The medieval notions of romance, adventure and chivalry, marvellous incidents and strange tales that reemerged in the 18th century along with their wild, elemental natural settings**, seeped into the 18th century Gothic.

Thus, the term Gothic came to be **associated with the narratives which dealt with supernatural, mysterious, or ghastly events, and the apprehension or production of terror, and which were usually situated in wild, stormy landscapes, eerie manors or castles**.

Gothic is about **generating an exaggerated response in the reader that can be expressed as terror, fear, horror, or dread of unexplainable, unknown and supernatural.** It **focuses both on the darkness outside, as well as, the one inside the human soul**.

The history, in the form of hidden family secrets, buried memories, and the supernatural, under the form of ghosts, undead, vampires, zombies, monsters
of all sorts represent the source of the ur
Gothic fiction. The uncanny, as defined by Sig
Freud (1856-1939), who invented the term, is
'undoubtedly belongs to all that is terrible – to
arouses dread and creeping horror'. It **expres**
the horror provoked by, either something
awakens the archaic world inside us, repr
a sense of déjà-vu, or something familiar
terrifying.

Another major concept related to that of the uncanny is **the sublime**, which was explained by Edmund Burke, in *Of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). Burke's definition confines the sublime to '**whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger', including the threat of 'death' and the dissolution of the self, by 'operating in a manner analogous to terror' so as to produce 'the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling'**. The **feelings of admiration and awe, along with the feeling of being reduced to something really insignificant, while seeing the mighty works of nature around,** represent the sublime in Burke's conception.



The sublime according to Edmund Burke has terror as its ‘ruling principle’, and one of the Gothic’s main distinctions is between **terror and horror**. Horror was considered more of **a physical feeling** (bloody, gory, gruesome details) while terror was seen as something **more psychological, more disturbing, but in a less brutal way**.

The concept of terror influenced the development of psychological Gothic, which is distinct from supernatural fiction. The 18th century Gothic horror evolved in the modern 20th century horror genre.

Gothic **relies heavily on atmosphere and settings to incite in the reader uncanny and sublime feelings**, that is, **the obscure, dangerous and breathtaking landscapes** relate to Edmund Burke's notion of the sublime. The Gothic **relies on old, bleak, remote, vast or unfamiliar settings**, as well. It **could be represented by a castle, an old house, a graveyard, a crypt, a decaying building, a secluded space, or a wasteland**.

In the 18th and 19th century Gothi the setting was usually a castle, monastery. Their dimensions, gl atmosphere, trapdoors, labyrinth an important role in conveying the fe of terror. Over the years, however, **t setting evolved to any bleak, glo secluded, dilapidated building, c that could create the same effect alienation and fear.**

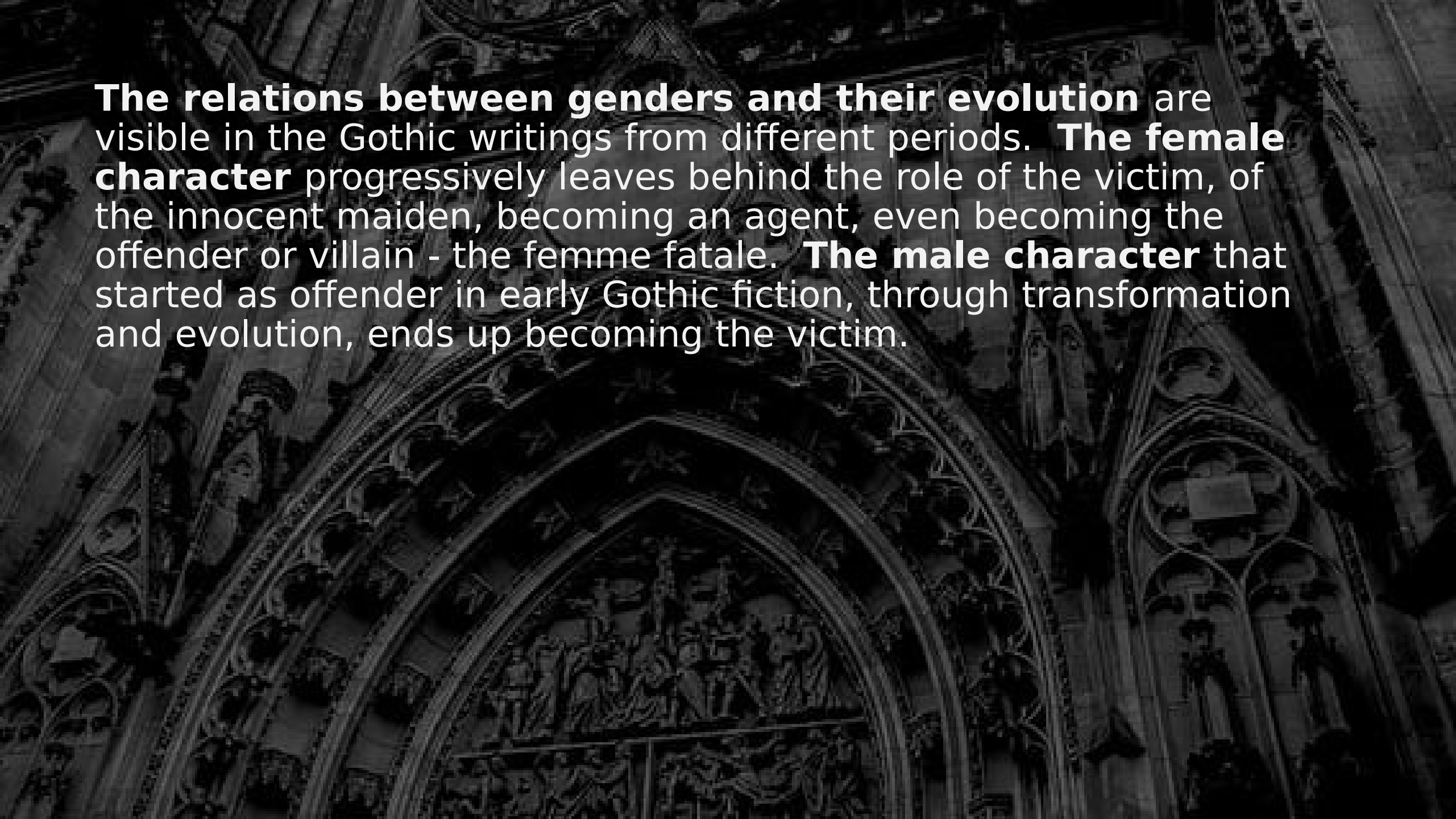
The Gothic cusp

5 **main types of characters in Gothic fiction:**
(1) **the hero**
(2) **the heroine**
(3) **the male** and (4) **the female foil** for the main character
(5) **the evil force or being.**

There is a progressive evolution of women characters in Gothic fiction: Ann Radcliff’s characters and the Bronte sisters’ heroines

Revenge and inheritance

Hauntings



The relations between genders and their evolution are visible in the Gothic writings from different periods. **The female character** progressively leaves behind the role of the victim, of the innocent maiden, becoming an agent, even becoming the offender or villain - the femme fatale. **The male character** that started as offender in early Gothic fiction, through transformation and evolution, ends up becoming the victim.

Forbidden knowledge

The satanic

The plot in Gothic fiction is formulaic, and usually moves forward through conventions, such as: omens, oracles, prophecies, visions or dreams.

Romance: **powerful love, uncertainty of reciprocation, unreturned love, the tension between true love and a father's control, disapproval of choice that leads to lovers being parted, illicit love or lust that threatens the virtuous one, rival lovers or multiple suitors**.
The intensity of feelings in Gothic literature had always been extreme, and **the protagonist's response to events exaggerated**.

Since the appearance of Gothic novels in the 18th century, the Gothic **was accused of creating unsettling realities, both in settings and characters**. **Critics worried that bad ideas could act like communicable diseases, infecting those who encounter them**.

The Gothic genre is **deeply ingrained in popular culture**.